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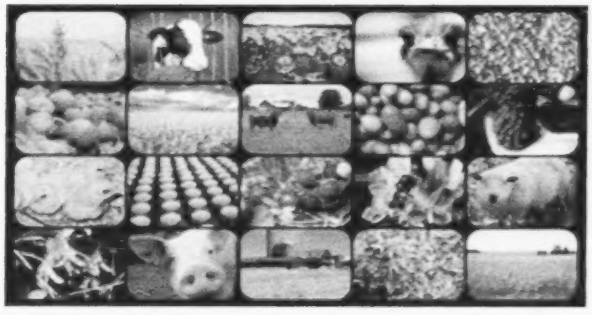
Cropland in Ontario grows despite fewer farms



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The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

. not available for any reference period
.. not available for a specific reference period
... not applicable
0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
^{p} preliminary
^{r} revised
x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
^{E} use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

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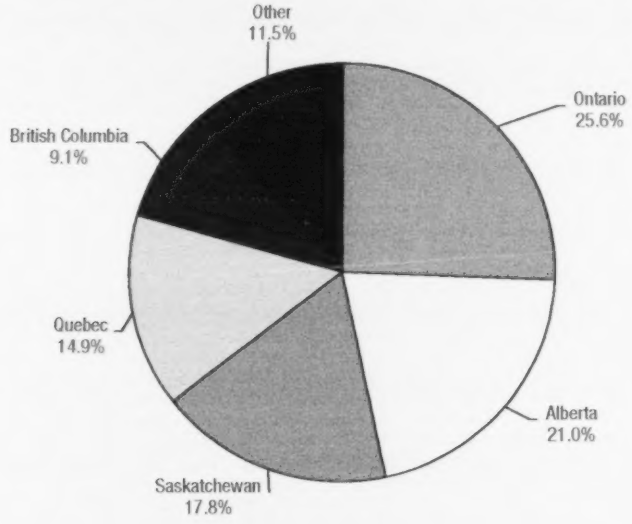
Cropland in Ontario grows despite fewer farms

Ontario accounted for over one-quarter of all of Canada's farms. The 2016 Census of Agriculture counted 49,600 census farms in Ontario, a 4.5% drop since 2011. This rate of decline was less than the national rate (-5.9%) and represented about half the rate recorded between 2006 and 2011 (-9.2%). Over the same period, the area of land in crops increased 1.0% to 9.0 million acres as operators converted land into productive area. In 2015, one-fifth of national gross farm receipts were generated by Ontario agricultural operations.

Chart 1
Provincial distribution of agricultural operations, 2016



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
Source: CANSIM table 004-0204.

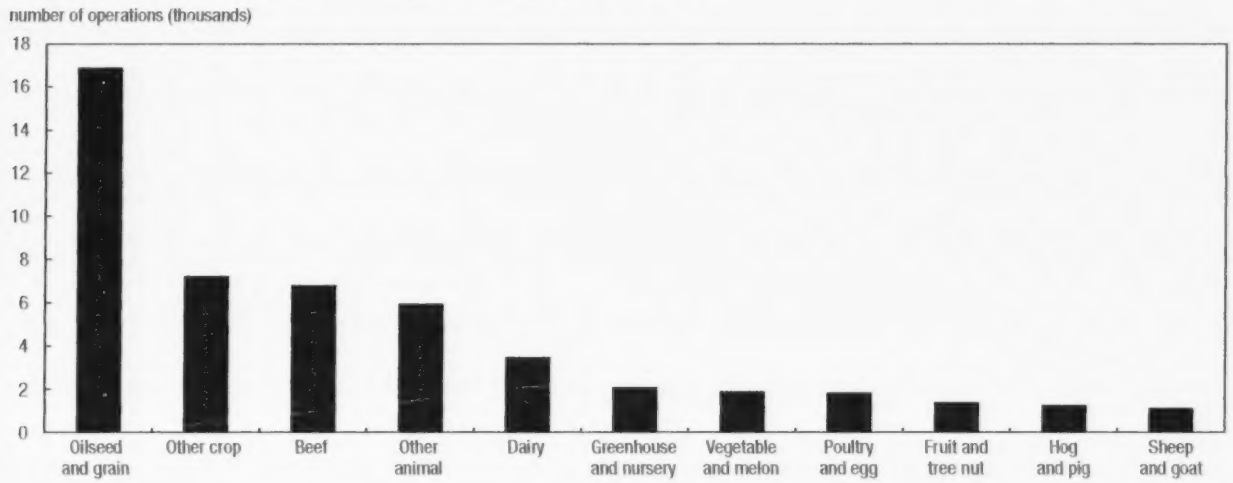
Primary agriculture represented 0.8% of provincial gross domestic product (agricultural GDP) in 2013. This percentage increased to 3.8% when agricultural input and service providers, primary producers, food and beverage processors, and food retailers and wholesalers industries were taken into account (Statistics Canada. 2013. Special tabulation, based on 2013 gross domestic product by industry – provincial and territorial).

Agricultural operations in Ontario employed 82,058 people in 2015.

Soybeans are the largest crop

Ontario continued to report the largest areas of both soybeans and corn for grain in the country. In 2016, Ontario accounted for 59.8% of national corn for grain area, and 49.6% of national soybean area. Both of these crops saw their acreage in Ontario grow since the last census. As in 2011, winter wheat held the third place in terms of area, despite a decline in area seeded. Crop rotations of corn and soybeans with a small grain such as wheat offer environmental and agronomic benefits including boosting biodiversity and breaking pest cycles while also increasing nutrient utilization. This practice improves capital and labour utilization by staggering planting and harvest windows and helps to manage business risk by varying products and hedges against commodity specific environmental and disease pressures. Ontario ranked fourth among the provinces for total field crop area. Oilseed and grain type operations accounted for the largest number of farms in the province, with 34.0% of farms reporting.

Chart 2
Total number of agricultural operations by operation type, Ontario, 2016



Source: CANSIM tables 004-0200.

Table 1
Largest three field crops, Ontario, 2011 and 2016

	Acreage	
Field crop	**2011**	**2016**
Soybeans	2,464,870	2,783,443
Corn for grain	2,032,356	2,162,004
Winter wheat	1,100,003	1,080,378

Source: CANSIM table 004-0213.

Cropland grows as farmers focused on production

The total farm area over which farmers had stewardship in Ontario decreased 2.5% from 2011 to 2016 to 12.3 million acres, while cropland increased 1.0% to 9.0 million acres. Although cropland grew, woodlands and wetlands, and pasture decreased.

Although the total farm area fell, the average farm size grew from 244 acres to 249 acres over the period. The five-years between 2011 and 2016 saw shifts of area away from hay and certain horticultural production (sod and nursery), in favour of the production of field crops and vegetables.

Total farm area, which is land owned or operated by an agricultural operation, includes:

- cropland;
- summerfallow;
- improved and unimproved pasture;
- woodlands and wetlands;
- all other land (including idle land, and land on which farm buildings are located).

Table 2
Components of cropland in percentage, Ontario, 2011 and 2016

Component of cropland	Percent of cropland[1]	
	2011	2016
Field crops	74.1	78.4
Hay	23.3	19.1
Vegetables	1.5	1.5
Fruits, berries and nuts	0.6	0.6
Sod and nursery	0.6	0.5
Total cropland	**100.0**	**100.0**

[1] Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding

Source: Census of Agriculture (3438).

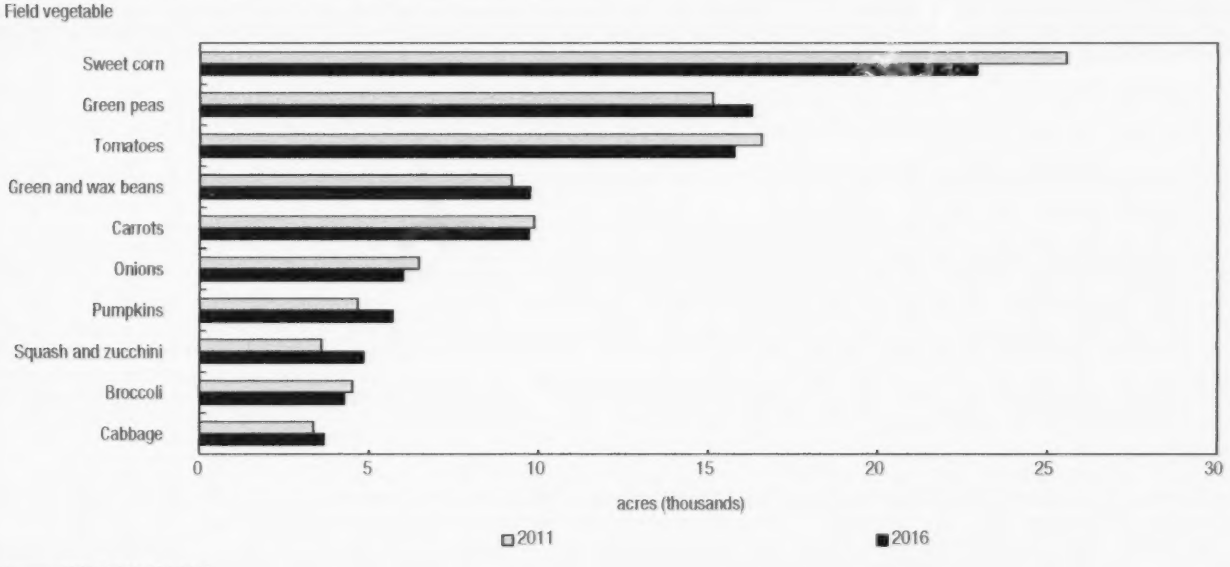
Ontario: Home to two-thirds of national greenhouse vegetable area

The area dedicated to greenhouse flower and vegetable production grew by 17.7% from 2011 to 151.5 million square feet in 2016. Growth in greenhouse vegetables, which rose by 29.8% to 111.9 million square feet, drove the increase. Ontario accounted for over two-thirds (67.6%) of greenhouse vegetable area in the country. In contrast, the area dedicated to greenhouse flowers fell by 6.9% to 39.6 million square feet. An increase in the number of flowers imported into Canada from other countries including Colombia and Ecuador have contributed to a decrease in Canada's flower production, with the value of imported flowers increasing since 2011 (Canadian International Merchandise Trade Database, table 990-0006, accessed April 19, 2017).

The total area of land used for fruits, berries and nuts decreased by 2.9% to 51,192 acres in 2016, due in large part to a drop in peach area. Since 2011, peach area has declined by 18.9% to 5,232 acres due to a lack of processing capacity. As was the case in the last census, grapes (18,718 acres), apples (15,893 acres) and peaches remained the three largest fruits, berries and nuts commodities in terms of area.

Field vegetable area grew by 4.5% from 2011 to 135,420 acres in 2016. As in 2011, the largest three field vegetables in Ontario remained sweet corn (22,910 acres), green peas (16,268 acres) and tomatoes (15,744 acres). However, in 2016, green peas surpassed tomatoes as the vegetable with the second largest area in the province.

Chart 3
Total area of selected field vegetables, Ontario, 2011 and 2016



Source: CANSIM table 004-0215.

Ontario leads in poultry

The number of broilers, roasters and Cornish fowl in Ontario increased by 6.0% from 2011 to 33.8 million birds in 2016. With just over one-third of the total national inventory, Ontario ranked first in terms of broilers, roasters and Cornish fowl.

The number of dairy cows in the province decreased by 1.9% from 2011 to 311,960 head in 2016, while the number of farms reporting dairy cows declined 14.2%.

Milk production increased by 9.9% over the period between censuses (CANSIM table 003-0011, accessed April 25, 2017). The decline in the number of dairy cows was offset by increased production per animal attributable to improvements in animal nutrition, genetics, and production practices.

The number of beef cattle declined 8.1% from 2011 to 710,617 head in 2016, as some producers sold stock to take advantage of higher prices and retire or shift to other types of agricultural production. The number of farms reporting beef cattle declined 14.7%.

Ontario had the second largest number of pigs in the country, increasing from 3.1 million in 2011 to 3.5 million in 2016, while the number of farms reporting hogs rose from 2,556 to 2,760. The growth was due to better market conditions, which boosted the price of pigs relative to the period preceding the 2011 census. Prior to the 2011 Census of Agriculture, the pig sector had been beset by high feed costs, disease and low pig prices, resulting in significantly fewer farms and a smaller pig herd (CANSIM table 002-0068, accessed April 25, 2017).

The sheep flock declined by 8.9% from 2011 to 321,495 animals in 2016.

Younger operators and women make up a larger share of farmers

Ontario reported 70,470 farm operators in 2016, a 5.8% decrease from 2011. Ontario's rate of decline of farm operators was the second lowest after Quebec.

Women made up 29.7% of Ontario farm operators in 2016, up from 28.4% in the previous census. Nationally, women accounted for 28.7% of the farm operators in 2016.

Over the five-year period between the censuses, the proportion of operators in the highest age category (55 years and older) increased to 55.1%, while the proportion of operators in the lowest age category (under 35 years) increased to 9.4%. The average operator age increased from 54.5 years in 2011 to 55.3 years in 2016.

Table 3
Proportion of farm operators by age group, Ontario, 2011 and 2016

	Percent of farm operators[1]	
Age group	**2011**	**2016**
Under 35 years old	8.2	9.4
35 to 54 years old	42.5	35.5
55 years and older	49.3	55.1
Total farm operators	**100.0**	**100.0**

[1] Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding

Source: CANSIM table 004-0239.

In 2015, 34.1% of farm operators in Ontario worked more than 40 hours a week on average on farm operations, compared with 37.0% in 2010. At the national level, this percentage was 37.5% in 2015.

Fewer farmers worked off the farm in 2015, with 46.3% of farm operators in Ontario reporting an off farm job compared with 47.8% in 2010. Nationally, 44.4% of farm operators worked off the farm.

Gross farm receipts and operating expenses grow for Ontario farmers

While gross farm receipts totalled $15.1 billion in 2015, operating expenses totalled $12.8 billion. On average, for every dollar in receipts, farms incurred 85 cents in expenses in 2015; an expense-to-receipt ratio of 0.85. In 2010, Ontario's expense-to-receipt ratio was 0.84.

The expense-to-receipt ratio varied among farm types. In 2015, operations typed as dairy and milk production continued to have the most favourable ratio at 0.76. However, dairy and milk production farms in Ontario also had the largest deterioration in the expense-to-receipt ratio; between 2010 and 2015 the ratio on these farms deteriorated from 0.72 to 0.76.

The expense-to-receipt ratio is the average amount of operating expenses incurred for a dollar in farm receipts. The ratio is calculated in current dollars.

Price indices were used to obtain constant dollar estimates of receipts, expenditures and capital values in order to eliminate the impact of price changes in year-to-year comparison.

Census Day was May 10, 2016. Farmers were asked to report their receipts and expenses for the last complete fiscal or calendar year (2015).

Other agriculture highlights in Ontario

- In Ontario, 10.4% of farms reported having renewable energy-producing systems in 2015. At the national level, the percentage was 5.3%.
- In Ontario, 22.0% of farms reported being incorporated in 2016, up from 16.8% in 2011. Nationally, incorporated farms accounted for 25.1% of the total in 2016.
- The 2016 Census of Agriculture marked the first time farm operators were asked to report having a written succession plan. In 2016, 8.5% farms in Ontario had a written succession plan, about the same as the national level (8.4%).
- The proportion of farms producing organic products in Ontario was 1.7% in 2016, up marginally from 1.5% in 2011. Nationally, farms producing organic products accounted for 2.2% of total farms.
- In Ontario, 13.8% of farms reported using automated steering technology in 2015.
- In Ontario, the average value of land and buildings on farms increased 41.4% (in 2016 constant dollars) since 2011, to $9,580 per acre in 2016. At the national level, this value was $2,696 per acre.
- In Ontario, 15.1% of farms reported selling agricultural products directly to consumers.

Canada 150: Farming in Ontario

Ontario was one of the original four provinces in Canada in 1867. In 1871, the first census after Confederation, the province had 172,258 farms and 16.2 million acres of farm land. By the end of the 19th century, Ontario field crop area was dominated by oats and wheat. Today, with 49,600 farms and 12.3 million acres of farm land reported, the average area per farm is nearly three times larger than in 1871 at 249.0 acres per farm. In 2016, Ontario was the biggest producer of soybeans and corn for grain in Canada, with corn for grain reaching 2.2 million acres, over 12 times higher than in 1891.

Statistics Canada would like to thank the farming community of Ontario for their participation and assistance in the 2016 Census of Agriculture.

Census farm: An operation is considered a census farm (agricultural operation) if it produces at least one of the following products intended for sale:

- crops: hay, field crops, tree fruits or nuts, berries or grapes, vegetables, seed;
- livestock: cattle, pigs, sheep, horses, game animals, other livestock;
- poultry: hens, chickens, turkeys, chicks, game birds, other poultry;
- animal products: milk or cream, eggs, wool, furs, meat;
- other agricultural products: Christmas trees, sod, greenhouse or nursery products, mushrooms, honey or bees, maple syrup and its products.

The data for Yukon and the Northwest Territories are not included in the national totals because of the different definition of an agricultural operation in the territories and confidentiality constraints. The data for Yukon and the Northwest Territories are presented separately.

Farm type: Farm type is established through a procedure that classifies each census farm according to the predominant type of production. This is done by estimating the potential receipts from the inventories of crops and livestock reported on the questionnaire and determining the product or group of products that make up the majority of the estimated receipts. For example, a census farm with total potential receipts of 60% from hogs, 20% from beef cattle and 20% from wheat, would be classified as a hog and pig farm. The farm types presented in this document are derived based on the 2012 North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS).

P.T.O. hp (Power Take Off horsepower): The measure of the power available from a tractor engine to drive implements.

Gross farm receipts: The Census of Agriculture measures gross farm receipts for the calendar or accounting year prior to the census. Gross farm receipts (before deducting expenses) in this analysis include:

- receipts from all agricultural products sold;
- program payments and custom work receipts.

The following are not included in gross farm receipts:

- sales of forestry products (for example: firewood, pulpwood, logs, fence posts and pilings);
- sales of capital items (for example: quota, land, machinery);
- receipts from the sale of any goods purchased only for retail sales.

Total operating expenses: The Census of Agriculture measures operating expenses for the calendar or accounting year prior to the census. Total operating expenses include:

- any expense associated with producing agricultural products (such as the cost of seed, feed, fuel, fertilizers, etc.).

The following are not included in total operating expenses:

- the purchase of land, buildings or equipment;
- depreciation or capital cost allowance. Depreciation represents economic "wear and tear" expense. Capital cost allowance represents the amount of depreciation written off by the tax filer as allowed by tax regulations.

2010 to 2015: Some data refer to a reference period other than Census Day. For example, for financial data the reference period is the calendar or accounting (fiscal) year prior to the census.

Farm operator: According to the census, a farm operator is any person responsible for the management decisions made for an agricultural operation as of May 10, 2016.

Contact information

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).